

Update on number of dengue fever cases

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (February 22) reported the latest number of cases of dengue fever (DF), and again urged the public to maintain strict environmental hygiene, mosquito control and personal protective measures both locally and during travel.

From February 15 to 21, the CHP recorded five imported DF cases. The patients had been to Malaysia (three cases), Indonesia (one case) and Thailand (one case) during the incubation period.

As of yesterday (February 21), 26 cases had been confirmed this year, all of which were imported cases. The cases were mainly imported from Indonesia (seven), Malaysia (five), Sri Lanka (four) and Thailand (four).

DF remains endemic in some areas of Asia and beyond. In Guangdong, there were 36 cases in the first month of this year. The latest figures for 2019 revealed that 6 501 cases had been recorded in Thailand, 15 469 in Malaysia and 1 572 in Singapore (since December 30, 2018).

The public should take heed of the following advice on mosquito control:

- Thoroughly check all gully traps, roof gutters, surface channels and drains to prevent blockage;
- Scrub and clean drains and surface channels with an alkaline detergent compound at least once a week to remove any deposited mosquito eggs;
- Properly dispose of refuse, such as soft drink cans, empty bottles and boxes, in covered litter containers;
- Completely change the water of flowers and plants at least once a week. The use of saucers should be avoided if possible;
- Level irregular ground surfaces before the rainy season;
- Avoid staying in shrubby areas; and
- Take personal protective measures such as wearing loose, light-coloured, long-sleeved tops and trousers and apply insect repellent containing DEET to clothing or exposed parts of the body when doing outdoor activities.

To reduce the risk of infections spread by mosquitoes, apart from [general measures](#), travellers returning from areas affected by DF and Zika virus infection should apply insect repellent for 14 days or at least 21 days respectively upon arrival in Hong Kong. If feeling unwell, seek medical advice promptly and provide travel details to the doctor. DEET-containing insect repellents are effective and the public should take heed of the tips below:

- Read the label instructions carefully first;
- Apply right before entering an area with risk of mosquito bites;

- Apply on exposed skin and clothing;
- Use DEET of up to 30 per cent for pregnant women and up to 10 per cent for children*;
- Apply sunscreen first, then insect repellent; and
- Re-apply only when needed and follow the instructions.

* For children who travel to countries or areas where mosquito-borne diseases are endemic or epidemic and where exposure is likely, those aged 2 months or above can use DEET-containing insect repellents with a DEET concentration of up to 30 per cent.

The public may refer to the CHP's [tips for using insect repellents](#) for details.

Consumer Price Indices for January 2019

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) released today (February 22) the Consumer Price Index (CPI) figures for January 2019. According to the Composite CPI, overall consumer prices rose by 2.4% in January 2019 over the same month a year earlier, slightly smaller than the corresponding increase (2.5%) in December 2018, mainly due to the Government's provision of electricity charge subsidy starting from January 2019. Netting out the effects of all Government's one-off relief measures, the year-on-year rate of increase in the Composite CPI (i.e. the underlying inflation rate) in January 2019 was 3.0%, slightly larger than that in December 2018 (2.9%), mainly due to the enlarged increases in the costs for meals bought away from home and the charges for household services.

On a seasonally adjusted basis, the average monthly rate of increase in the Composite CPI for the 3-month period ending January 2019 was 0.1%, and that for the 3-month period ending December 2018 was 0.2%. Netting out the effects of all Government's one-off relief measures, the corresponding rates of increase were both 0.2%.

Analysed by sub-index, the year-on-year rates of increase in the CPI(A), CPI(B) and CPI(C) were 2.8%, 2.3% and 2.3% respectively in January 2019, as compared to 3.0%, 2.4% and 2.2% respectively in December 2018. Netting out the effects of all Government's one-off relief measures, the year-on-year rates of increase in the CPI(A), CPI(B) and CPI(C) were 3.3%, 2.9% and 2.6% respectively in January 2019, as compared to 3.3%, 2.8% and 2.5% respectively in December 2018.

On a seasonally adjusted basis, for the 3-month period ending January 2019, the average monthly rates of increase in the seasonally adjusted

CPI(A), CPI(B) and CPI(C) were 0.0%, 0.1% and 0.2% respectively. The corresponding rates of increase for the 3-month period ending December 2018 were 0.1%, 0.2% and 0.3% respectively. Netting out the effects of all Government's one-off relief measures, the corresponding average monthly rates of increase in the seasonally adjusted CPI(A), CPI(B) and CPI(C) for the 3-month period ending January 2019 were 0.1%, 0.2% and 0.2% respectively, and the corresponding rates of increase for the 3-month period ending December 2018 were 0.1%, 0.2% and 0.3% respectively.

Amongst the various components of the Composite CPI, year-on-year increases in prices were recorded in January 2019 for food (excluding meals bought away from home) (4.2%), alcoholic drinks and tobacco (3.1%), housing (3.0%), miscellaneous services (2.9%), meals bought away from home (2.7%), transport (2.3%), miscellaneous goods (1.3%) as well as clothing and footwear (0.3%).

On the other hand, year-on-year decreases in the components of the Composite CPI were recorded in January 2019 for electricity, gas and water (-4.6%) as well as durable goods (-2.2%).

For the 3 months ending January 2019, the Composite CPI rose by 2.5% over a year earlier, while the CPI(A), CPI(B) and CPI(C) rose by 2.9%, 2.3% and 2.3% respectively. The corresponding increases after netting out the effects of all Government's one-off relief measures were 2.9%, 3.3%, 2.8% and 2.6% respectively.

For the 12 months ending January 2019, the Composite CPI was on average 2.5% higher than that in the preceding 12-month period. The respective increases in the CPI(A), CPI(B) and CPI(C) were 2.8%, 2.4% and 2.3% respectively. The corresponding increases after netting out the effects of all Government's one-off relief measures were 2.8%, 3.0%, 2.7% and 2.5% respectively.

Commentary

A Government spokesman said that the underlying inflation rate edged up to 3.0% in January. Given the likely distortion from the difference in timing of the Lunar New Year (which fell in early February this year but in mid-February last year), it would be more meaningful to examine the figures for January and February combined, when available, to assess the underlying inflation situation.

In the near term, the upside risks to inflation should remain contained. The recent moderation in fresh-letting residential rentals could have a mitigating effect in the months ahead. The moderating global economic growth and the earlier strengthening of the US dollar vis-à-vis other major currencies should help keep external price pressures in check. The Government will continue to monitor the inflation developments closely, particularly the impact on the lower-income people.

Further information

The CPIs and year-on-year rates of change at section level for January 2019 are shown in Table 1. The time series on the year-on-year rates of change in the CPIs before and after removing the effects of all Government's one-off relief measures are shown in Table 2. For discerning the latest trend in consumer prices, it is also useful to look at the changes in the seasonally adjusted CPIs. The corresponding time series on the average monthly rates of change during the latest 3 months for the seasonally adjusted CPIs are shown in Table 3. The rates of change in the original and the seasonally adjusted Composite CPI and the underlying inflation rate are presented graphically in Chart 1.

More detailed CPI data (including year-on-year comparison, month-to-month comparison, seasonally adjusted data series and the CPIs by the Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP)) are available in the monthly reports. Users can download the January 2019 issue of the "Monthly Report on the Consumer Price Index" (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp270.jsp?productCode=B1060001), the time series of CPIs at detailed level (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp270.jsp?productCode=D5600001), the time series of CPIs at COICOP division level (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp270.jsp?productCode=D5600002) and the time series of CPIs after netting out the effects of all Government's one-off relief measures (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp270.jsp?productCode=D5600003) free of charge at the website of the C&SD.

For enquiries about the CPIs, please contact the Consumer Price Index Section of the C&SD (Tel: 3903 7374 or email: cpi@censtatd.gov.hk).

[Survey of Innovation Activities for 2018 starts](#)

The Census and Statistics Department announced today (February 22) the commencement of the Survey of Innovation Activities for the reference year of 2018. The survey aims to collect information on innovation activities in the business sector. The survey results are useful to both the Government and the private sector in formulating policies and making decisions.

About 6 000 establishments in various economic sectors are sampled to participate in the survey. Questionnaires have been sent to sampled establishments individually together with the notification letters. To assist these establishments in providing the required information, an electronic template of the questionnaire will also be available upon request.

The statistical survey is a mandatory one conducted under Part III of the Census and Statistics Ordinance (Chapter 316). According to section 13(1)

of the Ordinance, any person to whom a questionnaire relating to a statistical survey is delivered shall complete the questionnaire or cause it to be completed by other persons to the best of his/her knowledge and belief, and in the manner specified in the questionnaire, and then return the questionnaire on or before the date specified in the questionnaire. The Ordinance also stipulates that all collected information which may enable identification of individual establishments should be kept in strict confidence. Only aggregate information, which does not reveal details of individual establishments, will be released.

The Department would like to thank those establishments which had participated in previous rounds of the survey; and appeal for the support and co-operation of the management of all sampled establishments in the current survey round by returning the completed questionnaires to the Department on or before April 30, 2019.

If necessary, census officers of the Department may phone or visit individual establishments to offer assistance in completing the questionnaire. These officers will each carry an Enumerator Identity Card and a certificate for conducting the survey, which are available for inspection.

Enquiries regarding the survey may be directed to the Science and Technology Statistics Section of the Department (Tel: 3903 7316 or email: sia@censtatd.gov.hk).

Red tides sighted

Three red tides have been sighted over the past week, an inter-departmental red tide working group reported today (February 22).

All of the red tides were spotted by staff of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. Two of the red tides were spotted on February 16 at Lido Beach in Tsuen Wan and Upper Cheung Sha Beach on Lantau Island. The other red tide was spotted on February 21 at Silver Mine Bay Beach on Lantau Island.

All red tides have dissipated. No associated death of fish has been reported.

A spokesman for the working group said, "The red tide at Lido Beach was formed by *Noctiluca scintillans*. The red tide at Upper Cheung Sha Beach was formed by *Akashiwo sanguinea*. The red tide at Silver Mine Bay Beach was formed by *Akashiwo sanguinea*, *Gonyaulax polygramma* and *Prorocentrum triestinum*. While *Prorocentrum triestinum* is not common in Hong Kong waters, the other three algae are commonly found in Hong Kong waters. They are all non-toxic."

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) urged mariculturists at the Ma Wan and Cheung Sha Wan fish culture zones to monitor the situation closely and increase aeration where necessary.

Red tide is a natural phenomenon. The AFCD's proactive phytoplankton monitoring programme will continue to monitor red tide occurrences to minimise the impact on the mariculture industry and the public.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia to visit Hong Kong

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Mr Sergey Lavrov, will arrive in Hong Kong on February 25 for a two-day official visit.

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, will meet with Mr Lavrov on February 26 at Government House.